

## Charity expands from school

BY MICHELLE SALYER  
FOR FLORIDA TODAY

A rainbow of swirling, colored lights illuminated the darkened gym at Holy Trinity Episcopal Academy as 200 teenagers gathered in one pulsing cluster, collectively stomping, sliding and twisting to the "Cha Cha Slide."

They weren't merely having fun -- they were saving lives.

Their dance raised \$1,800 for Malaria No More, a nonprofit organization that buys bed netting to keep sleeping families safe from malaria-carrying mosquitoes in Africa. And an anonymous donor matched the teens' generosity, making the total for the fundraiser \$3,600, enough to buy 360 bed nets.

The dance was part of a nationwide movement that students and parents at Holy Trinity have sparked to stop malaria in Africa.

Already, Merritt Island High has agreed to add \$5 to its Oct. 13 homecoming dance ticket to benefit the cause, dubbed Stayin' Alive, and Eau Gallie High has a fundraising program in the works.

The idea started with a single student, Holy Trinity senior Allyson Brown of Indialantic. After watching Oprah Winfrey interview U2's Bono about his AIDS/HIV fundraising organization, RED, last year, Brown was inspired to take action.

"I wanted to do something fun, something students would enjoy doing and that would benefit a great cause," the 17-year-old said. She suggested a \$10 admission fee for the school's Valentine's dance, which yielded \$1,600. But she still wasn't sure what to do with the money.

Brown and administrators consulted Ed Scott, one of the school's board of trustees members and the founder of Friends of the Global Fight against AIDS, TB and malaria.

Scott, a Merritt Island resident and parent of a Holy Trinity alumnae, suggested that money be given to Malaria No More, which for \$10 can provide one insecticide-treated bed net for a family in Africa.

Scott, who serves on the board for Malaria No More, was equally impressed with Brown's effort. "If a small school can raise more than \$1,000 in such a straightforward manner, we ought to be able to raise \$10 million across the country."

Soon after the dance, Scott put together a committee of volunteers, including Holy Trinity parent Candice Santomauro of Rockledge, and community members Colleen Middlebrooks of Suntree and Mason Craig of Satellite Beach.

Together, the adult advisers, Brown and several other students created a nationwide high school service movement called Stayin' Alive. Their goal is to raise \$10 million for Malaria No More by inspiring 10,000 high school dance-fundraisers during the next three years.

"Usually, when we think of a problem on such a large scale, we ask, 'What can one person do?' " said

Brown, who later plans to study hospitality or public relations at Florida State University.

"I believe that by getting knowledge out to the students about malaria, and raising money for bed nets in a fun, engaging way, students will want to help out and feel part of something bigger than themselves," Brown said.

To help educate other teens about the cause, the Stayin' Alive team has created a page on the Malaria No More Web site, [malarianomore.org/stayinalive](http://malarianomore.org/stayinalive), as well as a free, downloadable tool kit to help other high schools adopt the program in their own creative way.

Juniors Eric Johnson, 16, of Suntree, and Lauren Canina, 16, of Indian Harbour Beach, also will spread the word about the program by serving as youth reporters on [youthnoise.com](http://youthnoise.com), a forum for teens to post information about a variety of issues and causes.

"You'd think that to save a life, it would be this huge thing, all the medicines, equipment and everything," Johnson said. "But to think that I can save someone's life for 10 bucks, it's pretty amazing. It's something that's within everyone's reach."

Enthusiasm for the project is high all around. John Logsdon, marketing manager for Malaria No More and the Stayin' Alive program coordinator, traveled from New York to Melbourne for the Aug. 25 dance.

"What I saw at Holy Trinity gives us the sense that this program will be a success at a national level."

The committee members agree that all of the credit goes to the teens.

"I think we underestimate what kids can do," said Santomauro, one of three volunteers coordinating the program from Melbourne. "This program gives them a voice and a way to make a real difference."

For more information, visit [malarianomore.org/stayinalive](http://malarianomore.org/stayinalive) or call Candice Santomauro at 259-2045.

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